

24 March 2025

TTP0402
AM/MR

Metlink RPTP Review 2025
Greater Wellington Regional Council
By email only: RPTP2025@gw.govt.nz

Tēnā koe,

HORIZONS FEEDBACK ON – DRAFT WELLINGTON REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLAN 2025-2035

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Greater Wellington's Draft Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035. This feedback is made on behalf of Horizons Regional Council.

Background

The Horizons Region lies in the lower central North Island and because of its central location, it has important land and air transport connections to the rest of New Zealand. The region is bordered by the Greater Wellington, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Waikato regions.

In 2022, we concluded the public consultation, hearings and deliberations on our own draft Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP). The Plan was formally adopted by Council on 29 August 2022.

Through consultation, we received a high level of engagement from our regional and urban communities. A strong theme from our consultation and hearing process was the desire for more regional and rural services. This theme was not only limited to travel within our region but inter-regional travel across regional boundaries to enable access to larger centres and more options for our remote communities. Many submitters also expressed a desire to travel by passenger rail and asked for this to be represented more strongly in our Plan.

We listened to our community and as a result we enhanced our Plan in the following areas:

- Increased our focus on rail opportunities and reflected the strong desire for frequent and reliable passenger rail services to return to our region.
- Included inter-regional public transport connections in the list of potential future services.
- Committed to undertaking a region wide review of regional and inter-regional targeted services.

In 2023 Horizons undertook a region-wide review of regional and inter-regional services to ensure we have a connected and efficient network, and identify opportunities to reach, or better reach parts of the region with a network-oriented approach.

We thank Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) for the feedback you provided and the strong support you gave to improving our inter-regional public transport connections.

The public feedback received during the review showed a strong desire for our communities to connect south to Greater Wellington.

There are a number of possible projects which will be considered over the lifetime of this Plan. Inter-regional public transport between Palmerston North-Waikanae and Whanganui-Waikanae have been listed as short term priorities with longer term considerations investigating extended services Eketāhuna to Masterton (in collaboration with GWRC).

Horizons RPTP 2022-2032 has an action to consider inter-regional public transport options in collaboration with neighbouring regional councils and stakeholders.

We consider public transport access between our two regions to be important. A coordinated, joint inter-regional approach to planning new services will lead to better services for residents and visitors as well as environmental and safety benefits.

Horizons are interested in strengthening our relationship with GWRC given the importance of working together for cross boundary services. There is value in the RPTP including policies that guide development of strong communication between regional councils. This will ensure we collaborate on public transport options across boundaries.

The recent passing of changes to Land Transport Management (regulation of Public Transport) Amendment Act 2023 will remove previous barriers around planning and funding inter-regional transport solutions.

Horizons Te Mahere Waka Tūmatanui ā-rohe Regional Public Transport Plan 2022-2032 has a vision to connect people, places and opportunity. Enabling people to use public transport to get to where they want to go, when they want to go.

Feedback on content

We support the strategic direction of the GWRC draft RPTP. There are many similarities between the draft and the Horizons Plan. Given the importance of connections between our two regions, it is reassuring to see the two strategic passenger transport documents aligning with each other.

The value and pressures associated with the road and rail connections between the Horizons and Greater Wellington regions are well known. Both councils have long been advocating for change to improve the safety, efficiency and resilience of the road and rail corridors.

Conversations in recent years have been dominated by the need to retain and enhance the passenger rail connections (currently operating as the Capital Connection service) between Wellington and Palmerston North.

Collaboration and advocacy from both councils has been successful in securing funding for the Lower North Island Rail Integrated Mobility (LNIRIM) programme. The Council wishes to highlight its strong support for this project; given the value this service provides in connecting people and providing a lower carbon transport option.

We support improving the inter-regional bus connectivity of the Western Growth Corridor. The safe and efficient functioning of this corridor, and provision of services is critical to both our Region's economic development and the social wellbeing of our communities.

Our feedback largely focuses on inter-regional connectivity. Our comments on this matter are outlined in the following sections.

Inter-regional bus connectivity

The way people travel and where they want to go is not defined by regional boundaries. This is particularly so for communities near regional boundaries such as south of Levin. Public transport is



important to ensure communities have access to affordable transport options that meet their need and connect them to work, education, iwi, essential services and amenities.

Connecting communities along the corridor from Levin to Waikanae is important and we support the strong focus in the draft GWRC RPTP detailing the importance of the Wellington-Horowhenua transport corridor both now and into the future.

Horizons supports regional and inter-regional services which link core urban networks to other core urban networks such as Palmerston North and Whanganui to Waikanae. They will reach smaller rural communities like Manakau, Ōtaki, Te Horo where they sit along a route. Horizons acknowledges the interconnectedness of these communities and the limited transport options currently available.

This corridor has been identified as having accessibility needs for communities and in particular the transport disadvantaged to access important services such as health, education and justice.

We agree with your reference to Wellington–Horowhenua as being a key corridor. As detailed in the draft, the Western Growth Corridor is a priority and is expected to have future significant greenfield developments such as Tara-Ika and Tararua Road South, and also Tararua Road business development.

Horizons support the Kapiti Coast Future Network considerations and suggest unit 291 Waikanae-Levin service is represented in the current network pictorial.

Also we suggest correcting a typographical error on page 105 when referring to investigating bus services between Levin, Ōtaki and Waikanae it mistakenly references Manawātū District Council when it should read Horowhenua District Council.

With regard to Wairarapa–Tararua connectivity, since this plan extends to 2035, we suggest inserting a reference to investigating a regional connector service north of Masterton extending into the Horizons region (in collaboration with Horizons). While we understand currently this is not of high priority for either region, we see a need in the future particularly with the implementation of the Wairarapa Line (LNIRIM) from 2028.

Inter-regional rail connectivity

Progressing the LNIRIM programme is a significant development and investment to improving the commuter connections to Wellington, Palmerston North and Masterton.

We would like to thank GWRC staff for their willingness to collaborate with us to progress this key project. This project is highly anticipated by our communities and we look forward to continuing to work alongside GWRC to bring this programme into implementation in 2028.

We fully support GWRC endeavours to reduce public transport emissions by decarbonising the fleet through new rolling stock and increased frequency of services encouraging mode shift leading to reductions in congestion and emissions.

We note on page 103 the draft mentions "Investigate the potential for new rail stations north of Paraparaumu". We are not clear what specific towns this is referring to. If this is referring to towns north of Waikanae such as Manakau, then this would be of interest to Horowhenua residents and would offer a closer option for park and ride rail access to Wellington.

Further to this, it would be beneficial to have the metro rail service continuing to Ōtaki to improve accessibility for Horowhenua residents and wider Horizons residents.



Regarding park and ride demand management, we note Waikanae is showing as a hotspot with 85% of parks occupied by 7 - 7:30am. This directly impacts people driving south from Horizons region to connect to the metro service. We note the points made in the Plan with the inefficiencies of the current system impacting those with genuine need. We support the exploration of a solution to integrate with the introduction of the Motu Move programme. However, we do caution with ensuring costs remain realistic so as not to deter travellers accessing the park and ride from outside Kāpiti district and also to remain competitive with private vehicle costs.

We appreciate the alignment and co-operation that already exists between councils and look forward to taking the opportunity to enhance our inter-regional connections for the benefit of our communities and the environment. We support continuing to explore cross-boundary services between the Horizons and Greater Wellington regions, including regular and open lines of communication between Councils.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Wellington Regional Public Transport Plan 2025-2035.

We do not wish to be heard in support of this submission, however welcome any feedback or questions of clarification. In this instance, please contact Mark Read, Transport Services Manager on 0508 800 800 or by email at transport@horizons.govt.nz

Yours sincerely,



Sam Ferguson

CHAIR, PASSENGER TRANSPORT COMMITTEE